

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO, AO

SUBJ: ANGOLAN VIOLENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PORTUGAL

REF: (A) LISBON 2741

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SUMMARY: THE VIOLENCE IN ANGOLA HAS BEEN FRONT PAGE NEWS IN PORTUGAL, HIGHLIGHTED BY THE ARRIVAL OF JUMBO JETS FULL OF REFUGEES. A BREAKDOWN OF THE ALVOR AGREEMENTS AND A MISSTEP IN THE PORTUGUESE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS WILL HAVE IMPORTANT EFFECTS ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN METROPOLITAN PORTUGAL. THE EXPECTED EFFECTS ON GOP LEADERS, PORTUGAL'S THIRD WORLD STRATEGY, THE MAN IN THE STREET, THE ARMY, THE ECONOMIC SITUATION, AND THE PARTIES ARE ANALYZED IN THIS CABLE. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE VIOLENCE IN ANGOLA HAS BEEN FRONT PAGE NEWS

APPEARANCE IN PORTUGAL, HIGHLIGHTED BY THE ARRIVAL OF JUMBO JETS FULL OF REFUGEES. (REFTEL A). THE PUBLIC AND THE GOVERNMENT HAD HOPED THE STICKY ANGOLAN DECOLONIZATION PROBLEM WAS SOVLED BY THE ALVOR AGREEMENT. INCREASING SIGNS OF A BREAKDOWN IN THE AGREEMENT HAVE REQUIRED THE DESPATCH OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO LUANDA AND FORCED LOCAL POLITICAL OBSERVERS TO PONDER THE LINKAGE BETWEEN WHAT HAPPENS IN ANGOLA AND THE FUTURE OF PORTUGAL.

2. THAT THERE IS A LINKAGE IS CONVENTIONAL WISDOM ON THE LISBON POLITICAL SCENE. WHAT THAT LINKAGE MEANS IS SUBJECT TO DIFFERING POINTS OF VIEWS. WE SEE THE FOLLOWING EFFECTS:

3. AFM: THE AFM STANDS TO LOSE A LOT IF A BREAKDOWN OCCURS IN THE SO FAR SMOOTH DECOLONIZATION PROCESS. WITH DECOLONIZATION A PRINCIPAL POINT IN ITS ORIGINAL PROGRAM, THE AFM WILL LOOK LESS EFFECTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL IF THE ANGOLAN SITUATION DEGENERATES. OCCURING IN PARALLEL WITH ECONOMIC SLIDE, THE ANGOLAN PROBLEM CAN BE A BLOW TO AFM PRESTIGE AND POWER.

4. EFFECT ON GOP LEADERS: FOR SOME POLITICAL LEADERS THERE IS A DIRECT PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT. ADMIRAL ROSA COUTINHO, NOW CUTTING A FLASHY FIGURE ON THE LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE, WAS HIGH COMMISSIONER WHEN THE AGREEMENT AMONG THE THREE LIBERATION GROUPS WAS WORKED OUT. IF THE AGREEMENT FALLS APART, COUTINHO'S REPUTATION FOR HAVING ACHIEVED THE IMPOSSIBLE IN ANGOLA, LOSES MUCH OF ITS LUSTRE, AND COUTINHO'S POLITICAL CLOUT COULD BE SUBSTANTIALLY DIMINISHED.

5. FOREIGN MINISTER MELO ANTUNES, "MR. DECOLONIZATION" OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT, ALSO STANDS TO LOSE IF THE ANGOLAN ARRANGEMENT FALLS APART. ALREADY IN AN EXPOSED POLITICAL POSITION BECAUSE OF THE MODERATE ECONOMIC PLAN HE DEvised BEFORE MARCH 11, ANTUNES' POLITICAL POSITION IN THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WOULD SUFFER. ANTUNES' EFFORTS AT BUILDING HIMSELF UP AS THE PORTUGUESE AMBASSADOR TO THE "THIRD WORLD" WOULD LOOK HOLLOW AND LACKING IN RESULTS.

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6. THIRD WORLD STRATEGY: THOSE IN THE GOP URGING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE THIRD WORLD MAY LOOK LESS CREDITABLE IF THE THIRD WORLD STRATEGY DOES NOT PAY OFF IN THE ONE AREA IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE MOST USEFUL--THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS.

7. OVERALL REACTION: THE GOP AND THE MAN IN THE STREET SHARE THE FEELING THAT ANGOLA IS A CLOSED BOOK

WHICH THEY WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE OPENED. CONTINUED
STRIKE IN ANGOLA WILL FORCE THAT BOOK OPEN AGAIN AND
CAUSE CONCERN AND UNHAPPINESS WITH A LEADERSHIP THAT
IS UNABLE TO KEEP THE DECOLONIZATION PROBLEM OUT OF
SIGHT AND OUT OF MIND.

8. THE ARMY: THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT HERE THAT THE
PORTUGUESE ARMY IN ANGOLA WILL NOT FIGHT. NOBODY WANTS
TO BE THE LAST MAN TO DIE AS PORTUGAL WALKS OUT THE
DOOR OF AFRICA. YET THE ARMY HAS OBLIGATIONS UNDER
THE ALVOR ACCORD. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THESE
RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE VERY LIMITED RISK THE SOLDIER
FROM THE METROPOLE IS WILLING TO TAKE IS BOUND TO HAVE
CONSEQUENCES FOR THE ARMY IN PORTUGAL. IF THE SITUATION
DETERIORATES TO THE POINT WHERE THE ARMY MUST GO INTO
ACTION, A DIFFICULT CHOICE FACES THE ARMY LEADERSHIP--
EITHER FORCE RELUCTANT SOLDIERS INTO ACTION OR LOOK AS
IF PORTUGAL IS UNWILLING TO COMPLY WITH ITS DECOLONIZATION
RESPONSIBILITIES. CASUALTIES IN THE ARMY WHILE SO
ENGAGED WILL FURTHER AGGRAVATE THE PROBLEM BOTH WITHIN
THE ARMY IN ANGOLA AND AT HOME, WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE
CONVINCED THAT THE FIGHTING IS OVER. FURTHERMORE, THERE
IS THE VERY REAL FEAR THAT IF THE SOLDIERS RETURN FROM ANGOLA
ANGERED ABOUT GOP DECOLONIZATION POLICY THEY COULD CONSTITUTE A
POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS SOURCE OF OPPOSITION TO THE GOP.

9. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS: A LARGE INFLUX OF REFUGEES FROM
ANGOLA WILL BE SEEN AS AGGRAVATING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS
ALREADY PERCEIVED AS SEVERE BY THE PUBLIC AND THE GOVERN-
MENT. THE GOP HAS NOT PLANNED FOR THIS CONTINGENCY AND
IS ANXIOUS FOR THE WHITE ANGOLAN TO STAY IN ANGOLA.
FURTHERMORE, FAILURE TO EFFECT A SMOOTH DEPARTURE FROM ANGOLA MAY
JEOPARDIZE GOP EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN SPECIAL ECONOMIC LINK WITH ITS
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FORMER COLONIES.

10. THE PARTIES: IN A MAY 14 PRESS INTERVIEW, RC MEMBER
CAPT VASCO LOURENCO ACCUSED THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE
PEOPLE OF NOT TAKING ANY INTEREST IN THE MILITARY IN
ANGOLA. SOME SEE THIS AS AN ATTEMPT TO LAY THE GROUND-
WORK FOR TAGGING THE PARTIES WITH PART OF THE BLAME FOR A
FAILURE IN ANGOLA.
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